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ABSTRACT

This report describes an approach to citizen education being developed by the Mershon Center at Ohio State University. The approach is based on the international experiences citizens have in the course of daily life in their local community. Part one of the report explains three premises upon which the approach rests: (1) the local community provides a critical arena for international participation and learning for citizens, (2) a new dimension of citizenship is the making and influencing of decisions associated with the international relations of daily life, and (3) citizen preparation for a global age should recognize that all members of the public are linked together in a potential learning community. Part two presents a strategy for strengthening citizen competence. It includes increased use of community resources by schools in order to internationalize citizenship education programs, involvement of interested citizens in helping schools create new instructional programs, and helping community groups cope more effectively with international issues related to their own objectives. Part three describes projects and activities initiated in Columbus, Ohio to enhance international and citizenship awareness. Included are the International Council of Mid-Ohio which serves as a clearinghouse for international information and a facilitator of international activity, a coalition of international volunteer agencies, and development of a local high school course and a national workshop on internationalizing citizen education. (Author/AV)

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A COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACH TO CITIZEN EDUCATION FOR A GLOBAL AGE

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A COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACH TO CITIZEN EDUCATION FOR A GLOBAL AGE

> For Americans interdependence is now a condition they must deal with themselves, not a theory about other peoples problems. We have learned that interdependence is not something to be for or against, but a fact to be lived with now and reckoned with in the future.
>
> *Harlan Cleveland*

We are currently experiencing the intensified globalization of the human condition. Interdependencies affecting all of us have gone far beyond cultural ties, traditional diplomatic negotiations or distant military confrontations. The actions of others around the world directly affects the quality of our air and water; the price of our food and gasoline; the levels of our inflation and employment; the taxes we pay; the subject matter of our books, theatre and television; the size of our armed forces; the availability of consumer goods; and our outlook on the future. In turn, how we behave can affect employment rates in Europe; budget allocations in South America; a family's vacation in Japan and the survival of wildlife in Africa.

With these changes has come a growing concern about what is termed "international," "global," "world order," "multi-cultural," "foreign affairs," or "foreign relations" education. Public and private foundations are supporting activity in these fields. Conferences and reports on civic literacy regarding world problems have proliferated. And statements assessing the current state of global education have been issued. This expanding concern has dramatized the real need for fresh approaches which bring the distant and complex processes implied by terms like "global, international, world-order, foreign affairs" education close to the everyday lives of individual citizens, young and old alike.

This report describes an approach to citizen education being developed by the Mershon Center's *Citizenship Development Program* and the Center's *Columbus in the World Project*. This approach is rooted in the international experiences citizens have in the course of daily life in their local community and represents a substantially different starting point for international education. We believe this approach can dramatize the consequences of interdependence and promote participation in global processes which are increasingly affecting individual lives and fortunes.

In what follows we first state the fundamental premises on which the approach rests. These premises are not a curriculum in the sense of things to be taught. They are a point of departure; a framework for guiding education and learning. We then consider the implications of these premises for a strategy of educational development. Finally, we describe steps which could be undertaken to implement this approach to citizen education.

PREMISES

Since 1972 the Mershon Center's *Columbus in the World Project* has pursued a community-action/research agenda designed to learn how people in the city of Columbus Ohio are linked to the rest of the world through such activities as business, religion, medicine, education, travel, the arts, agriculture, labor and the like. From the beginning the Project has assumed that people will be most interested in those international processes that link them and their local community to the world. It has also assumed that the proximity and concreteness of local linkages can build a learning base for eventual understanding of more distant processes and events.

Since 1974, the Center's *Citizenship Development Program* has sought to design new approaches to citizen education which join the needs of children and teachers with social science grounded knowledge about political life and human development. A major activity of the Program has been the creation of the widely acclaimed Citizenship Decision-Making: Instructional Materials for Grades 4, 5, 6. These materials treat political decision-making as a task of civic life encountered by young and old alike. They teach the skills of making, judging and influencing decisions in everyday life. The materials comprise an experience-based approach to citizen education.

From the work of these two Projects has emerged three empirically grounded premises which can, we believe, form the basis of a constructive, practical, and attractive response to the challenge of international education. These premises are:

- The local community (city, town, county, metropolitan area) provides a critical arena for international participation and learning for citizens.
- An important new dimension of citizenship has become making, judging and influencing decisions associated with the international relations of everyday life.
- Effective citizen preparation for a global age should recognize that students, teachers, people already involved in local international activity and the wider public are co-learners linked together in a potential learning community.

Let us examine each premise briefly.

Local Communities as Arenas of International Activity

A view of foreign policy and international relations as consisting solely of interactions between national governments is not adequate for advancing citizen competence in today's world. For one thing, the modern nation-state does not have one foreign policy. It has many,

conducted by a wide range of governmental actors. Further, multinational corporations and governmental and private international organizations have their own foreign policies and engage in many international activities. In addition, cities have become important loci of international social, economic and political processes. They are a microcosm of social processes that are the very substance of transnational relations.

Indeed, our research indicates that local communities form a primary arena of international activity for most citizens and a rich data bank for the construction of instructional materials. The community provides a diversity of facilities and services through which people in different countries are linked. These include airports, banks, customs and travel agencies. People in many occupations in cities and towns are being increasingly propelled into international involvement by global social and economic processes. Manufacturing, banking, insurance, education, religion, sports, agriculture, military and tourist activities, to name a few, provide international links between people in cities in different parts of the world.

Thus, *it is our premise that the local community is a critical arena for efforts to advance citizen awareness and competence in regard to international affairs* because: (a) most people are linked to global social and economic processes through their participation in various facets of local community life and (b) citizen awareness and understanding of local linkages to the world can build the cognitive and motivational base for participation in the foreign policy processes of the national government, as well as of other actors involved in transnational relations.

Tasks of Citizenship in a Global Age

Citizens' *daily lives* are filled with international links. Through social institutions and processes such as trade or tourist travel, through technologies such as televisic through universal "languages" such as mathematics or music, and through beliefs such as democracy, people are linked to other people around the world.

An effort to keep a diary of local/global linkages soon becomes an overwhelming task as the full range becomes clear--

awakened by a Japanese clock radio . .
A Swiss watch provides a double-check on the time . .
morning coffee from Brazil . .
ride to work in a Fiat . .
on tires made of Malayan rubber . .
while listening to the Beatles . .
on a German-made radio . .
buying Saudi-Arabian gas . .
and diamonds from South Africa.

Local/global linkages implicate citizens in an array of human chains that extend to all areas of the globe. And these linkages are not only related to our lives as consumers--

money in our savings accounts is reinvested in an apartment complex in Chile . .

investment in a local industry helps produce weapons that kill people in distant places . .

money dropped in the church collection plate helps to build a school in Nicaragua.

Such linkages also implicate citizens in housing policy in Chile, conflict in distant places and education policy in Nicaragua.

Granted we are involved in an intricate web of local/global linkages, how does the "average" citizen relate to such links in his community? Individuals and the groups to which they belong are constantly making, judging and influencing decisions associated with the international relations of everyday life. Longshoremen, for example, decide whether

or not to load American grain on ships bound for Russia. Or a group of concerned business leaders seeks to influence the state legislature to provide financial inducements to foreign companies to locate in their state. Or members of a university committee decide to restrict programs for foreign students at their institution. Or local church members judge it unfair that church policy toward the world food problem is set by the national headquarters rather than being individually determined in each diocese.

Making, judging and influencing decisions about local/global linkages constitutes international relations and foreign affairs at the grassroots level. It is such citizenship activities on the part of millions--probably billions--of people that shape the basic patterns of international relations. Yet, people are often unaware that they are engaged in such activities. Further, in some instances people miss significant opportunities to shape local/global links that could affect their lives simply because they were not aware that they had an opportunity to do so. "Foreign affairs" for many citizens is too often seen as consisting solely of interactions between statesmen pursuing the "national interest" in distant capitals.

Given this situation, *it is our premise that in an increasingly interdependent world a critical task of citizenship has become making, judging and influencing decisions associated with the international relations of everyday life*. The capability to deal with this task rests on an *awareness* of how oneself and the groups to which one belongs are personally linked to global social and economic processes. Such an awareness is a *necessary but not sufficient condition* for developing competence with making, judging and influencing decisions about international social and economic processes.

Looked at this way, "international" or "global" education involves education *for something* rather than simply education *about* something. It involves helping citizens, young and old alike, develop the problem-solving capacities associated with making thoughtful decisions; it involves helping people develop the skill to make reasoned judgments about their own international behavior and the decisions and actions of others; it involves helping people develop the capacity to exert some influence over international social and economic processes in which they are inevitably involved in daily life.

And these capacities rest upon an ability to perceive and understand local/global linkages. This involves seeing how one's nation, one's community and one's self are linked to nations, communities and people elsewhere in the world--a self-conscious awareness of what people are doing to you and what you are doing to them. Understanding also means acquiring useful information from the social environment relevant to making, judging and influencing decisions. Further, understanding involves an awareness of the diversity and commonality in human societies and a sense of the cultural limitations of one's own perspective.

A Learning Community

Citizenship education has become segregated from daily life in the community. It has become a "subject" to learn in school *now* because it will be good for you *later*--when you are an adult. And "international" or "global" education has been separated from citizenship education--often as some esoteric speciality only of real interest to future elites.

In actuality children, teachers and adults in the community are interdependent elements in an on-going educational process. Schools have a special opportunity and responsibility to guide young people's

citizenship education for a global age. The social studies and non-social studies curriculum offer many examples of local/global linkages. And as a social organization within the community, the school--its culture, organization and physical equipment (e.g. desks from Germany, chalk from England, etc.)--is itself a rich arena for international learning. Finally, potentially at least, schools possess the analytic resources necessary to help young people better understand the international life of their own community.

Community groups and institutions--such as the League of Women Voters, the YMCA, churches, and business--are vitally important arenas of international activity and learning for adults. The global awareness of adults in these groups can affect the international awareness and involvement of the community as a whole. In addition, community groups and institutions are related to the citizenship education of the young in several ways. First, many groups such as churches, YMCA's and scouting programs are themselves involved directly in the education of the young through their own programs. Second, many adults in these groups have an interest in international affairs but are often unsure about how to translate that interest into practical action either in regard to their own community or in regard to the schools. Finally, the more adults know about their own international activities the more knowledgeable they will be as community resource people for schools.

Thus, *it is our premise that an effective strategy for international education will link children, youth and adults--present and future citizens--in a learning community*. Such a strategy would integrate hitherto segregated elements through the simultaneous participation of students, teachers and non-teachers in instructional activities as co-learners. Schools and communities would be recognized as key elements

which stand bound together in a symbiotic relationship. Ultimately, the community is dependent on the schools for the caliber of its future citizens. And the schools are dependent on the community for support and as a rich "laboratory" where students can personally experience local/global linkages.

A STRATEGY FOR STRENGTHENING CITIZEN COMPETENCE

A clear implication of these premises is that the challenge today is not to "teach" interdependence as a concept in the conventional sense. Rather, the real need is to help people *experience* interdependence in a conscious and meaningful way and to develop people's skills in coping with the consequences of interdependence in daily life. It would make sense, therefore, to design a strategy that uses resources in the school and community to enhance people's capacity to participate in global social, economic and political processes which affect their lives.

The strategy we envision would involve simultaneous activity in two domains--elementary and secondary schools and the communities in which schools are located. Schools and community organizations are related but distinct reference points in this strategy.

What would be the major components of such a strategy? Three components would seem to be required. The *first would consist of actions designed to enhance the capacity of schools to manage and draw upon resources in the community to internationalize the citizenship education of students.* Such actions might include teacher education, staff development and curriculum development activities. These activities would be aimed at helping teachers and administrators with the practical problems associated with revising and updating instructional programs for elementary and high school students. In addition, new supplementary materials designed to help schools capitalize on curriculum investments

already made could be developed.

The second component would consist of actions designed to increase the capacity of interested citizens to work constructively with schools on the creation of new instructional programs. Such actions might include activities which created the opportunity for community people to serve as resource people in schools and gave them the chance to wrestle with the actual design of new educational programs. Activities of this type could eventually provide an informed pool of "local talent" which could be drawn upon by teachers as needed.

The third component would consist of a set of actions designed to help community groups cope more effectively with international issues relevant to their own objectives. This could include activities to help members become more aware of the opportunities they and their group have to make, judge and influence decisions related to the international dimension of local community life. These actions might also involve programs aimed at helping people become more aware of the international involvements of their organization and how these involvements might be shaped in the future.

TESTING THE STRATEGY

Over the last two years several activities of the Columbus in the World Project and the Citizenship Development Program have allowed us to explore and test elements of this strategy in the real world. These activities have brought us into contact with literally hundreds of community, business and religious leaders; educational decision-makers; and parents, teachers and students. They have given us confidence in the workability of the strategy and have generated an unexpectedly large number of requests for assistance with educational programs by schools and community organizations.

Recently, for example, the YMCA organization invited Columbus in the World to make presentations to representatives from fifty urban and metropolitan YMCAs in Kansas City and also to the staff of the international division and international committee of the national YMCA in New York City. Columbus in the World is now in consultation with the international division and the Milwaukee YMCA toward the end of developing means for YMCAs to inventory the international connections of their cities as a part of an educational program for teenagers that could then be applied to other YMCA programs.

Three interrelated projects have helped us learn how to increase the capacity of community groups to cope more effectively with international issues and problems. The first of these was the creation of the International Council of Mid-Ohio with a board consisting of prominent citizens from banking, insurance, education, voluntary organizations and churches. This organization serves as a clearinghouse for international information and a coordinator and facilitator of international activity. The Council has listed increased international education in the public schools as one of its prime goals.

A second project, International Life of Central Ohio, is a coalition of international volunteer agencies (visitor hosting, exchange programs, international relief organizations, etc.) that is providing a number of new common services for these agencies--a composite calendar of international events in the area, an emergency language bank, and a handbook of international services and opportunities for service. Both these projects are educational devices that help people in the Mid-Ohio area to perceive the international dimension of community life and to become involved in it.

A third project has been "All World City" which is attempting to organize the agricultural, technological, industrial and voluntary sectors of the community toward the end of joining with a Third World city in solving food problems in that city. It is looked upon not only as aid to the Third World city, but also as a learning experience for people involved from Columbus. They will learn about the "Food Power" of their city, the food needs of a Third World city and perhaps even new customs through which Columbus people can learn to put reduced demands on the limited resources of the world.

These three projects suggest that the international connections of a community can be used for the participatory education of adults. Through involvement in community organizations people are learning by doing and by teaching others how to become involved in international relations.

Several additional activities have been directed to increasing the capacity of schools to internationalize citizen education. After seeing various reports on the activities of Columbus in the World, a Columbus eighth and ninth grade teacher built a unit in a geography course around these reports. This led to an invitation from the Director of Social Science in the Columbus schools to provide workshops for junior high school social studies teachers. Another activity of national scope was the development of a workshop for K through 12 teachers for the annual convention of the National Council for the Social Studies.

Columbus in the World materials were also the basis of a unit on "The Global Community" in a new Houghton Mifflin fifth grade social studies textbook. The unit provides the students with an introduction to international relations through the international contacts of individuals, groups and organizations in a city. The text uses pictures and

other material from Columbus to give the teacher exercises for inquiry into the home city of students using the book.

The Citizenship Development Program is currently working with the Evanston Illinois Public Schools to develop a small set of prototype learning exercises for use in grades K-8. Development of these experimental materials will test alternative ideas about how to conceptualize international activity, and what instructional methods can best apply that conceptualization tc practical problems of citizen education in elementary schools.

As a result of the variety of needs and requests that have been thrust upon us, we conclude:

- Information on the international transactions of a local community is the appropriate beginning point for the international education of children for two reasons. First, as we have argued, the local community itself is the focal point of major international transactions and second, such a beginning point is pedagogically sound. It permits treating international transactions as something with which children and significant individuals in their lives are intimately involved rather than as a thing apart. This cognition or recognition is vital groundwork for the ability and commitment to make, judge and influence decisions associated with international transactions.

- Special efforts must be made to sensitize teachers so that they can perceive, observe and teach about these international transactions. Special efforts are necessary for, as we have consistently observed, the intellectual habits of most individuals tend to screen out the international dimensions of their immediate environment.

- Information on the international connections of their community has implications for adults already interested in international affairs and lifts their aspirations for international activity in the community, including an increased interest in international education in the schools. Thus, it can propel them into a deeper international participatory learning process.